



WISEWOMAN

Success Story 7 Mary Ellen's Story: Right on Time for Her Health

*Alaska Woman Works Out Often, Eats Healthier Foods,
Tackles Stress*

Location Rural southeastern Alaska

Focus Empower women to take charge of their health and begin making healthy changes in diet, physical activity, and dealing with stress.

Strategy Project staff members empowered women and helped them as they moved toward improving their health, and they became role models and champions, encouraging more women to enroll in WISEWOMAN.

Levels of Success Many intrapersonal benefits have resulted. Knowing about and having access to WISEWOMAN prompts women to take action and is a starting place for them to turn their intentions into a course of action.

Interpersonal accomplishments also have been made. Positive and encouraging staff members with a cultural background similar to those in your target audience can empower women to take steps to improve their health. Teaching women how to build their skills and helping them set goals aid them in making informed decisions.

Results Mary Ellen's empowerment and leadership have the potential to positively affect her, her friends and family, and hundreds of women.

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Mary Ellen's Story: Right on Time for Her Health

Alaska Woman Works Out Often, Eats Healthier Foods, Tackles Stress

Mary Ellen is an active participant in the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) WISEWOMAN program. Before Mary Ellen enrolled in WISEWOMAN, she had begun the process of being healthy but did not cope well with stress. Mary Ellen enrolled in the SEARHC WISEWOMAN program soon after it began. The WISEWOMAN Program gave her the chance to take steps to improve her health.

When she came to WISEWOMAN, Mary Ellen met with Deneise, the patient health educator, who made her more aware of her heart health, including her cholesterol and blood pressure. In a caring and positive manner, Deneise worked on a plan with Mary Ellen to improve her health. Mary Ellen chose the goals she wanted to work on. This empowered her to start taking gradual steps toward a healthy lifestyle.

In Mary Ellen's Words

"The WISEWOMAN Program came at a time when I needed to actively focus on my overall health needs: physical exercise, nutrition, and facing stress head on and dealing with it. Initially, I met with Deneise for my health screening. She went over the results with me, told me about my present health status, and set goals with me to improve my health. We worked on a plan together—a course of action. Her positiveness and encouragement were contagious. I went home determined to begin making changes in my life."

"Evelyn, the program's community wellness advocate, enthusiastically encouraged me to have more fitness in my life. I now work out 4 to 6 days a week. It has been exciting to see what increased physical activity does to my body. I'm learning to be honest with myself when stress happens; face it and get on to other parts of my life. I have also started to work on eating more veggies and fruit each day instead of just occasionally."

About SEARHC's WISEWOMAN Program

Women who participate in the SEARHC WISEWOMAN program have their blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose levels checked and undergo some other tests. Once her lab results are in, the woman is referred to a patient health educator for health counseling. Deneise was Mary Ellen's patient health educator. This visit takes about an

hour and a half. Women are then invited to attend health initiatives and "gatherings." Health initiatives promote physical activity or nutrition and may include group sports challenges. Gatherings focus on health topics such as stress management. At gatherings, women share their stories and help each other maintain their new, healthy habits.

Importance of Success

Mary Ellen seeks ways to improve her health and encourages others to do the same. She is friendly, helpful, and encouraging. She is an advocate for health and a WISEWOMAN program champion. She even made suggestions for gatherings that were used to make the program even better.

Mary Ellen now approaches health in a holistic way: she works out regularly each week,

is starting to have healthier eating habits, and is learning to honestly face the things that cause stress in her life.

Lessons Learned

- Joining WISEWOMAN gave Mary Ellen the chance to take steps to improve her health.
- Positive and encouraging staff, made up of women who were like Mary Ellen, provided the support she needed to take these steps.
- Mary Ellen took one step at a time toward health and wellness.



Mary Ellen, WISEWOMAN Champion